

## Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 EA-10 ISO-00 IO-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

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R 211623Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7740

INFO AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

USIA WASHDC

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SUBJECT: FRENCH PUBLIC REACTION TO SHOOTING OF AFP  
CORRESPONDENT.

SUMMARY: ALL FRENCH MEDIA, ACROSS THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM, CONDEMN THE SHOOTING OF PAUL LEANDRI IN SAIGON ANTI COMMUNIST AURORE AND COMMUNIST HUMANIST CARRY THE SAME HEADLINE (MARCH 17): "FRENCH JOURNALIST MURDERED BY SAIGON POLICE." CONDEMNATION IS EXPRESSED BY THE PRESIDENT AND OTHER PUBLIC FIGURES, MOST NOTABLY THE PRESIDENT OF AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE.

L. THE FOLLOWING QUOTES ARE TYPICAL OF THE FRENCH PRESS REACTION, WHICH IS UNANIMOUS IN CONDEMNING SHOOTING BY THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE POLICE; MINUTE (RIGHTIST WEEKLY): "REVOLTING AND IGNORABLE, THIS ASSASSINATION OF OUR CONFRERE PAUL LEANDRI BY A SOUTH VIETNAMESE POLICEMAN. WHATEVER THE GRUDGE THE SAIGON POLICE MIGHT HAVE HAD AGAINST THE AFP JOURNALIST."

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NALISTS, NOTHING CAN JUSTIFY SUCH METHODS OF KILLERS."

AURORE (CONSERVATIVE DAILY USUALLY FAVORABLE TO SOUTH VIETNAM): " PAUL LEANDRI KILLED BY THE SAIGON POLICE...HIS DEATH AROUSES WIDE INDIGNATION IN ALL POLITICAL CIRCLES ALL OVER THE WORLD, INSOFAR AS IT CAN BE ASCRIBED TO INSTITUTIONAL VIOLENCE LEADING TO MURDER." LE QUOTIDIEN DE PARIS (LEFT-OFCENTER DAILY): "PAUL LEANDRI, THE AFP CORRESPONDENT IN SAIGON WAS KILLED BY SOUTH VIETNAMESE POLICEMEN FRIDAY NIHT...THE OFFICIAL COMMUNIQUE SUBSEQUENTLY ISSUED BY THE POLICE 'COVERS' AND EVEN EXCUSES THE DOINGS OF POLICE OFFICIALS: 'LEANDRI IS SAID TO HAVE ADOPTED AN INSULTING ATTITUDE.' THIS IS ENOUGH TO BE SENTENCED TO DEATH IN SOUTH VIETNAM."

2. MOST LENGTHY COMMENTS APPEARED IN FIGARO AND LE MONDE (IT IS TO BE NOTED THAT DECORNOY, AUTHOR OF LE MONDE'S STORY, IS KNOWN FOR HIS ANTI-GVN VIEWS): FIGARO STORY BY FORMER AFP COLLEAGUE MAX COIFFAIT TITLED "DEATH OF A WITNESS": "STUPOR, INDIGNATION. THE IMMEDIATE REACTION OF THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT IS SHARED BY THE ENTIRE WORLD. LEANDRI, AN ACCURATE, HONEST WITNESS WAS MURDERED -- THERE IS NO OTHER WORD TO DESCRIBE HIS DEATH... LEANDRI HAD QUOTED THE TESTIMONY OF A SOUTH VIETNAMESE PRIEST THAT NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS WERE PRACTICALLY NOT PARTICIPATING IN THE BATTLE FOR BAN ME THUOT. THE SAIGON REGIME DOES NOT PERMIT SUCH REPORTS. THE POLICE TRIED TO EXTORT FROM LEANDRI THE NAME OF HIS INFORMER. FAITHFUL TO WHAT HONORS HIS PROFESSION, HE REFUSED TO SPEAK AND DIED FOR THAT...HOW CAN THE THIEU GOVERNMENT STILL DARE TO PRETEND THAT IT DEFENDS FREEDOM?" LE MONDE STORY BY JACQUES DECORNOY: "WHETHER OR NOT HIS MURDER WAS PREMEDITATED, PAUL LEANDRI WAS MURDERED... LEANDRI DID NOT WANT TO REVEAL THE SOURCES OF HIS REPORTS ...LEANDRI WAS NOT BRIBABLE...BELYING THE OFFICIAL PROPAGANDA AS HE DID IS VERY EXPENSIVE IN SAIGON. THE LEADERS IN SAIGON, TO BE SURE, HAVE REASONS FOR BEING NERVOUS...BUT HOW CAN FRANCE COOPERATE WITH A REGIME WHOSE POLICE OFFICIALS PULL OUT THEIR SUBMACHINE GUNS WHEN THEY HEAR THE WORD 'REPORTING'?"

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3. PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING SAID IN A TELEGRAM OF CONDOLENCES TO LEANDRI'S WIDOW THAT HE WAS DEEPLY MOVED BY HER HUSBAND'S DEATH "WHICH TOOK PLACE UNDER REVOLTING CIRCUMSTANCES."

4. JEAN MARIN, PRESIDENT OF AFP SAID IN A FORMAL STATEMENT: "IT IS ALREADY CLEARLY ESTABLISHED, BEFORE ANY INQUIRY, THAT IF LEANDRI HAS NOT BEEN A JOURNALIST, HE

WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN KILLED. IT IS THE JOURNALIST WHO WHILE REPORTING UNQUESTIONABLE FACTS AND STATEMENTS WROTE A DISPATCH WHICH DISPLEASED THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES. IT IS THE JOURNALIST WHO, BECAUSE OF THAT DISPATCH, WAS SUMMONED, FIRST TO THE IMMIGRATION SERVICE AND THEN TO THE SECURITY. IT IS THE JOURNALIST WHO, TIRED

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OF WAITING FOR HOURS WHILE HE WAS NOT ARRESTED OR IN CUSTODY, WANTED TO GO BACK TO HIS OFFICE. IT IS THE JOURNALIST WHO WAS KILLED. TO CLAIM THAT I WAS HIS FAULT BECAUSE HE LOST HIS TEMPER AMOUNTS TO CONFESSING THAT ONE CAN KILL A MAN FOR A FIT OF ANGER, AFTER ALL QUITE UNDERSTANDABLE."

5. AFP UNION REPRESENTATIVES SAID: "THE AUTHORITIES OF SAIGON BEAR TOTAL AND INEXCUSABLE RESPONSIBILITY IN THIS MURDER. THIS CRIME, TOGETHER WITH THE ADMINISTRATIVE HARRASSMENT TO WHICH OUR COLLEAGUE WAS

SUBJECTED, MUST BRING ABOUT A STRONG CONDEMNATION OF A REGIME THAT STILL DARES TO AVAIL ITSELF OF THE DEFENSE OF LIBERTIES." THE UNION OF JOURNALISTS SAID IN A COMMUNIQUE: "NOT ONLY THE WHOLE OF OUR PROFESSION HAS BEEN STRICKEN WITH THE SHOOTING OF AN UNARMED COLLEAGUE, BUT SUCH AN ACT ALSO CONSTITUTES A REAL AND PAINFUL ATTACK ON THE PRINCIPLES OF THE FREEDOM OF THE PRESS." AT THE END OF A DEMONSTRATION BEFORE THE

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AFP HEADQUARTERS IN PARIS TUESDAY AFTERNOON, A DELEGATION OF THE UNION OF JOURNALISTS WENT TO THE EMBASSY OF SOUTH VIETNAM TO DELIVER A PROTEST.

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